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ABSTRACT

An elementary school principal designed and implemented a practicum study to improve the homework performance of junior high students. Goals of the practicum were to: (1) decrease the number of students who received failing grades due to incomplete or missing homework; and (2) establish a district homework policy which would provide a guideline for teachers designing homework assignments and result in positive academic results for students. In conjunction with teachers in grades three through eight, a homework policy was developed and implemented for a seven-month period. After implementation, parents, students, and staff were surveyed to determine whether the policy was supported by all groups and was effective in increasing the number of assignments completed and handed in. Practicum evaluation data indicated that outcomes were positive: there was a significant decrease in the number of students failing a course due to incomplete homework. Teachers learned that parents were supportive of homework. Parents took an active role in working with children at home. Students believed that the amount of homework assigned daily was satisfactory. All groups stated that they believed that homework is essential for academic success. Appendices provide a statement of the homework policy, survey instruments used, and related materials. (RH)

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Improving Homework Performance at the
Junior High Level

by

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Improving Homework Performance at the Junior High Level

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Kathleen J. Parkhurst

Cluster XXIII

A Major Practicum Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1989

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ABSTRACT

Improving Homework Performance at the Junior High Level. Parkhurst, Kathleen J., 1989: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.

Descriptors: Homework/Junior High/Study Skills/Parent Participation/Home Study/School Policy/Parent Role/Study Skills/Academic Achievement/Mathematics Improvement/Teacher Effectiveness

This practicum was designed to improve the homework performance of junior high students. The primary goal was to decrease the number of students who received failing grades caused by incomplete or missing homework. The second aim was to establish a district homework policy which would provide a guideline for teachers in designing homework and result in producing positive academic results for students.

The writer and teachers in grades three through eight developed a homework policy which was implemented for a seven month period. After implementation, parents, students and staff were surveyed to determine if the policy was supported by all groups and was effective in increasing the number of assignments which were completed and handed in.

The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that there was a significant decrease in the number of students failing a course due to incomplete homework. Teachers learned that parents were very supportive of homework and took an active role in working with their children at home. Students conveyed the fact that they believed the amount of homework assigned daily was satisfactory. All three groups; parents, teachers and students stated they believed homework, especially studying for tests, is essential for academic success.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The community in which the practicum took place is a rural town in the rapidly growing sunbelt section of southwestern United States. This community currently enjoys the small town amenities which a population of approximately 4,000 people offers. The tranquility of this prized area located at approximately 5,000 feet above sea level is being threatened by four separate developers whose combined building projects are predicted to yield a moderate estimate of 65,000 people within the next ten years. The effects of this growth are already visible in the increased enrollment in the school. The community recently passed a \$2,000,000.00 bond issue and is currently building eleven new classrooms to provide for the growth.

Traditionally, this community is closely linked with a nearby copper mining town with the majority of the male residents working in the mines. Recently that industry has declined and as there is no other employment available, the residents are forced to travel a distance to work. The lack of employment

travel a distance to work. The lack of employment opportunities has not hampered the growth of the town since its climate, clean air, plush vegetation and mountains are a great attraction. The area is also noted for its artistic community, offering live theatre, summer stock, jewelry crafters, and world renowned artists. Conveniently situated between the two major cities in the state, it is definitely an oasis in the desert. It is about 40 miles northeast of a city that houses the state's largest university, and is one of the major tourist centers in the country. Recently, a major technological company built a factory within a thirty minute drive of this community, adding to the population growth.

The socioeconomic composition of the community is generally middle class. For years, the majority of its residents were retired couples but recent studies have demonstrated the population shifting to younger couples with families. Approximately 40% of the population is second generation Mexican-American, with a negligent Black and Native American population.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The district in which the practicum took place is an elementary school district with an enrollment of 580 students in grades kindergarten through eight. Its 250 high school students are tuitioned out to nearby high school districts. After ten years of stable enrollment, the school is experiencing a growth of approximately 50 students a year. This number is expected to increase considerably within the next two to three years. Like the community, the student population is 40% Hispanic, 0% Black, 0% Native American and 60% Anglo American.

The district is comprised of two campuses. The Primary School (K-2) is located at one end of town on the original school site. The first school building, a southwestern adobe structure built in 1938, still houses the second grades. Because of its age and the expanded population, the Primary campus is considered substandard and inadequate. The Elementary/Junior High School (3-8) and District Office are newer buildings located at the opposite end of town. It is at this site that the current building is being constructed. It is also here that this practicum took place.

The school is part of the state public education system with an appointed state board of education as its guardian. The county department of education acts as a liaison for the local districts and the state. The County Superintendent of Curriculum works closely with the schools, especially the small rural districts. The local governing board, however, is autonomous in forming policies and procedures for the district in compliance with state regulations. Because the school is the sole avenue for entertainment and social gatherings, the public is supportive of school programs and functions.

The philosophy of the district encompasses the belief that every child has the right to the opportunity for development to his/her fullest potential. To reach this end, the staff established goals which will result in the development of basic skills, provide for individual needs and abilities, and produce effective, socially adapted citizens. The staff of thirty-six certified and thirty-five classified personnel has a high level of dedication. Because of its size, the teachers and staff provide a personal, family environment for children. Parents have easy access to teachers, administrators and

support staff. Parental involvement in the school is evidenced by the thirty-two volunteer parents who work at the Primary School on a weekly basis. In order to maintain a personal relationship with students, the district has adopted the philosophy that small classes provide opportunities for personalism, keeping the average class size to 20 students. Even at the junior high level (grades 7-8), where students change classes, homeroom teachers are assigned to 23 students for whom they provide guidance, direction and personal needs.

The administration consists of a full-time principal at the Primary School, a full-time principal for the Elementary/Junior High School and a superintendent. The superintendent has a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and the two principals are currently doctoral candidates. The faculty is comprised of 26 classroom teachers, one special education cross-categorical self-contained classroom teacher, four special education resource specialists, a music teacher, an art teacher, two physical education teachers, a psychologist, a remedial reading instructor, a part-time speech therapist, a librarian and an instructor in English as a Second Language. The total instructional staff is made up of seven males and

32 females. Four are Mexican-American and 35 are Anglo-American. All teachers hold certification and degrees appropriate for their assignment. Thirteen hold masters degrees or higher, and one has a doctorate. Twenty-six teachers are continuing teachers with a range of service between 4 and 23 years. Twenty-one members have taught in the district for three years or less.

Academic class assignments are based on teacher recommendations with a concerted effort to maintain thoroughly heterogeneous ability groups from kindergarten through eighth grade. The basic skills of reading, English, spelling, mathematics, as well as science, social studies, physical education, music and art are taught in all grades K-8. The Elementary/Junior High School offers an extra-curricular program in which students may participate in the afterschool sports program or become a member of a club such as the Computer Club, Home Economics Club, Young Astronauts Club, Chorus, Science Club, School Newspaper, Student Council, Drama/Dance Club, and Library Club.

Special programs offered to meet the needs of the learning disabled students are resource rooms, with

a strong emphasis on mainstreaming students. Severely learning disabled and emotionally handicapped students are served in a self-contained classroom. These students, however, are mainstreamed in all areas except the basic skills classes. Approximately 30% of the student population receive assistance through pull-out programs either resource, remedial reading, English as a second language or speech therapy. The students have traditionally scored among the highest ranked schools in the county in the annual state mandated testing program.

The writer is approaching her twenty-fifth year in education; 11 years as a classroom teacher at the elementary level and 14 years as an elementary school principal. The last five years have been served as Middle School Principal at the site where the practicum will be conducted. The writer holds an undergraduate degree in education, a master's degree in elementary education with a minor in child psychology and a master's degree in theology. She is certified by the Department of Education as an elementary school teacher K-8, an elementary school principal and a reading specialist.

The writer spent 19 years in education on the

east coast both as a classroom teacher and principal. Her present position is her first held in the southwest. She began her assignment as a part-time principal of the Primary School, teaching Chapter I Reading half day. The second year, she served as full-time principal at the Primary School. A year later, she became principal of the Elementary/Junior High School where she is beginning her fourth year in this position. Along with the principalship, the writer is the district curriculum director, and inservice coordinator. Over the years she has served on various committees, the most current of which is the district Professional Development Committee.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Description of Problem

The school district in which the practicum took place has had a homework policy for several years. Policy 5.8 adopted February 5, 1987 states that "homework will be given in all grades on a regular basis for the purpose of promoting responsibility, providing practice of skills and fostering independent study habits. The amount and frequency of giving homework will be determined by each teacher." The phrase "regular basis" was translated by some teachers as every night of the school week, while others interpreted "regular" as meaning once or twice a week. Some teachers issued consequences for homework not completed while others did not collect or correct homework. In certain classrooms homework was included as part of the final grade while in the next classroom at the same grade level, homework was infrequently assigned, rarely collected and corrected and was not an integral part of the final grade. Such inconsistency in assigning importance to homework created a lack of understanding in the minds of students regarding the real purpose of homework.

By the end of sixth grade, the goal of the district is that students become independent learners, responsible for their own work. At this grade level, therefore, most teachers gave homework, in an effort to prepare students for junior high school. Again, the frequency and amount of homework given varied among classrooms. Because doing homework is considered part of the formative background for upper level education, the grades received on designated homework assignments were put toward a final report card grade, students who did not hand in homework assignments were assigned afterschool detention and their parents were notified. Students often received extensions on their due date when their assignments were not ready on time. They depended on teachers to notify them of late or outstanding assignments. When homework was not completed on time and a failing grade was apparent, students requested extra assignments from teachers in order to gain extra credit to pass. Parents also expected teachers to notify them when their children had late or outstanding homework assignments and requested the teacher to keep track of these assignments for the students. Throughout their first six years of school, students were exposed to a variety

of different philosophies regarding homework, based on the individual teachers' beliefs and interpretation of the district policy. As a result, when these students reach junior high school, they will have failed to acquire either a clear, intelligent attitude regarding homework or learn to be responsible for their own work.

At the junior high level, one-third of the quarterly report card grade was based on homework. At the middle of each marking quarter students who had the potential of failing a subject were issued a deficiency slip. This notice indicated why the student was failing and what needed to be done in order to improve his/her grade. before report cards were distributed. Out of approximately 120 deficiency slips given each quarter, 95 of them indicated the child was failing because of a lack of homework. Even though students were given extra time to hand in assignments they were often not completed, causing them to receive a failing grade. Many parents were at a loss as to what to do, since they claimed they saw their children do homework at home but then the child failed to bring the completed work to class and hand it in.

Beginning in second grade, students were

taught a developmental, sequential course in study skills. They were taught how to memorize, listen, take notes, write papers, organize materials and use the library for research. Despite this fact, students continued to fail to study and do homework.

The staff believed that in order to prepare students for junior high and high school academics, the responsibility of the elementary school was to assist them in acquiring independent study skills. These skills included responsibility in handing in completed assignments on the date due, having assignments done in a neat and orderly manner and having achieved a specific learning objective from having done the assignment. The students in the school in which the practicum took place were not trained to be independent, responsible learners through homework performance. In summary, therefore, the problem addressed by this practicum was that the students at the sixth, seventh and eighth grade level did not complete and hand in homework assignments on a regular basis, causing them to receive failing grades.

Problem Documentation

At the junior high school level, during the fifth week of each nine week marking period, students who exhibited the potential of receiving a failing report card grade in a given subject area, were given an academic deficiency notice (Appendix A). This notice indicated the cause of failing and gave recommendations on how, within the remaining four weeks of the period, the recipient might improve his/her grade. These notices were used at the discretion of the teachers in the intermediate grades but were required to be used by teachers at the junior high level. The deficiency notices were filled out in triplicate; one was mailed to the parents, another was filed in the student's cumulative record file and the final copy was given to the principal for review. The notices were signed by parents then returned to the teachers showing that parents and students had been notified of a possible failing grade, as well as the reason for that failure. The deficiency notices also indicated possible options for improvement such as tutoring, special education resource placement, greater attention during class, more study and preparation (homework) or a conference with either the teacher or

counselor. Table 1 shows the number of students who received deficiency notices at the junior high level during the 1987-88 school year.

Table 1

Number of Deficiency Notices Distributed by Subject Area - 1987-88

Total Number of 7th Grade Students = 57									
Total Number of 8th Grade Students = 61									
Subject:	Math	Rd'g	Sci	SoSt	Eng	Mu	PE	Art	Total
<u>First Qtr.:</u>									
7th Grade:	6	7	6	9	11	5	2	0	46
8th Grade:	7	5	4	15	12	5	5	0	53
<u>Second Qtr.:</u>									
7th Grade:	4	4	2	15	9	0	3	0	37
8th Grade:	0	7	5	9	7	0	5	0	33
<u>Third Qtr.:</u>									
7th Grade:	6	10	7	14	16	1	6	0	60
8th Grade:	11	11	4	11	12	3	4	1	57
<u>Fourth Qtr.:</u>									
7th Grade:	9	12	5	11	14	6	3	0	60
8th Grade:	11	10	4	15	13	5	6	0	64
Total	54	66	37	99	94	55	34	1	410

A total of 410 deficiency notices were distributed at the end of four marking periods to 118 students. This resulted in an average of 102 deficiencies each quarter. In some cases one student received more than one deficiency. The average number of failing notices

per child was three. The second quarter shows some improvement, while the fourth quarter shows the highest number of deficiencies. Social Studies and English, had the highest number with no significant difference in numbers between seventh and eighth grade. Table 2 shows the number of students who received failing notices due to the reasons listed on the notice.

Table 2

Reasons for Deficiency Notices Being Issued 1987-88

Reason	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total
<u>First Quarter:</u>			
Homework missing or incomplete	47	53	100
Generally unprepared for class	10	7	17
Inadequate reports or projects	0	0	0
Insufficient class participation	2	0	2
Poor test results	3	1	4
Incomplete notebook	0	0	0
Low interest level	0	0	0
Lacks foundation	0	0	0
Poor attendance	0	0	0
<u>Second Quarter:</u>			
Homework missing or incomplete	33	32	65
Generally unprepared for class	5	4	9
Inadequate reports or projects	0	0	0
Insufficient class participation	10	5	15
Poor test results	6	3	9
Incomplete notebook	38	32	70
Low interest level	0	0	0
Lacks foundation	0	0	0
Poor attendance	1	1	2

Table 2 Continued

Reason	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total
<u>Third Quarter:</u>			
Homework missing or incomplete	62	50	112
Generally unprepared for class	12	4	16
Inadequate reports or projects	10	8	18
Insufficient class participation	2	3	5
Poor test results	9	3	12
Incomplete notebook	35	27	62
Low interest level	1	1	2
Lacks foundation	0	0	0
Poor attendance	1	1	0
<u>Fourth Quarter:</u>			
Homework missing or incomplete	58	60	118
Generally unprepared for class	12	8	20
Inadequate reports or projects	5	2	7
Insufficient class participation	9	11	20
Poor test results	11	13	24
Incomplete notebook	25	14	39
Low interest level	1	1	2
Lacks foundation	0	0	0
Poor attendance	0	0	0

Table 2 reflects the same number of students as Table 1 but shows higher totals since some students received deficiencies for more than one reason. Table 2 clearly demonstrates the major reason for failing grades to be either missing or incomplete homework. In most cases, teachers who indicated a child was not prepared for class also indicated that homework was missing. Teachers also stated that in the majority of cases poor test results were often the result of the

student not having completed homework. The high number of students with incomplete notebooks also indicates a homework problem since the Social Studies teacher requires a notebook to be completed and handed in before each grading period. This notebook is assigned as a homework project.

For a period of time, the Principal had a personal conference with each child who received a deficiency notice. During this private talk, the students' standardized test scores were reviewed in an effort to demonstrate to the student how capable s/he was of achieving passing grades. The records showed that many of these students were functioning one to two years above grade level in the intermediate years but showed a significant drop in the junior high years. In most cases, these students had the mental ability to be average or above achievers, but due to lack of performance, were among the bottom quarter of their class.

During the conference, the Principal worked out an individual plan with each student to provide support and ideas on how to improve grades. The majority of the students readily admitted that the major remedy for a failing grade was to complete and

hand in homework. Students offered such reasons as not understanding the assignment, not having the correct page or materials at home, and simply not having the time at home due to family obligations, to not knowing why homework was not being done. The large number of students receiving slips along with the increased responsibilities of the Principal caused these conferences to be discontinued.

Generally speaking, the deficiency notice sent to parents was sufficient motivation for students to complete unfinished homework and make up missing assignments so that they did not fail the course. There were, however, some students whose study and homework habits did not improve as a result of the deficiency notices. These students were put on a special program with weekly monitoring. For the most part, these students were those whose parents requested the school be more responsible for follow-up with their child. The Responsibility Sheet (Appendix B) was completed daily by each teacher who had the child and was mailed home on Friday. The sheet showed parents their child's fidelity to completing homework, degree of preparation for class, and conduct. Typically, these sheets were issued after first quarter

grades. It was at this time that parents became alarmed at their child's report card grades and requested some type of continuous accounting from the school regarding their child's academic progress.

The Responsibility Sheet provided teachers with a quick, complete method of reporting to parents. For some students a simple communication system between parents and school was able to change academic results for the positive. Table 3 shows the number of students who were on the Responsibility Sheet Program during the 1987-88 school year and the degree to which homework improved during this period.

Table 3

Responsibility Program - 1987-88

No. of Students on Program = 14

<u>Behavior Observed</u>	<u>Improved</u>	<u>No Improvement</u>
Homework completed satisfactorily	4	10
Came prepared for class	4	10
Acceptable conduct	4	10

The Responsibility Sheets were signed by parents and returned to the Principal for review. Whenever possible, before placing a child on the Responsibility Sheet, a conference was held with all teachers who

serve the child in any capacity, along with the parents, the principal and the student. During the period of time the Responsibility Sheets were used, additional conferences with parents were held.

As Table 3 demonstrates, some students benefited greatly from the monitoring process, while others did not change their behavior. Of the fourteen students using the Responsibility Sheets, four showed signs of improvement by independently doing homework, coming prepared for class and exhibiting proper social behavior during class. The remaining ten, despite frequent parent meetings, student-teacher conferences, Principal-student conferences and in some cases Counseling with the School Psychologist, behavior did not change. Teachers were very faithful in filling out the sheets and often made written comments to parents in an effort to keep them informed of their child's progress. After a period of time, the parents of those students who showed little improvement discontinued contact with the school. For this reason, the Responsibility Sheets were discontinued as a viable deterrent to incomplete homework.

Table 4

Number of Deficiencies Issued in Each Subject - 1987-88

Quarter	Math	Rdg.	Sci.	So. St.	Eng.	Mu.	P.E.	Art
1st.:	13	12	10	24	23	10	7	0
2nd.:	4	11	7	24	16	0	8	0
3rd.:	17	21	11	25	28	4	10	1
4th.:	20	22	9	26	27	11	9	0
Totals:	54	66	37	99	94	25	34	1

Table 4 shows the subject areas with the greatest number of deficiencies to be Social Studies and English. A comparison between seventh and eighth grade in the number of deficiencies issued in these two subject areas showed no significant differences.

Causative Analysis

The first cause for poor homework performance at the sixth, seventh and eighth grade level was sociological. Although an overwhelming majority of parents favored homework, they viewed homework as an intrusion on family life (Savage, 1969). Philosophically, parents agreed that homework is an essential aspect of schooling, provides needed

practice, builds responsibility and independent learning, yet these same parents resented the fact that after a full day of being separated; both parents at work and children in school, time must be spent on school work. Quite often this contradiction caused frustration and tension in families, making homework and the school the culprit. In addition to the tensions of family, students were also faced with the ever demanding schedule of afterschool activities. The district in which this practicum took place has a no-pass no-play policy which prohibits any student who earns a failing grade on a report card from participating in afterschool activities. However, when a child returned home from school in the late evening with an hour or more of homework to do, further family tensions developed.

Besides the causes generated by the family demands, the school itself created problems causing poor homework performance in its students. The second reason for the problem was the district homework policy. The loose and inconsistent interpretation of the policy by teachers and administrators did not provide the continuity and structure needed for a comprehensive policy which met the needs of the

students and staff in the district.

The third roadblock to homework success was the fact that rigid correlation of homework to grades did not begin until the sixth grade level. By this time, students had already acquired the habits they will apply during their remaining school years. If they had managed to get by without independent studying and applied practice, they had missed out on developing responsibility. Although the results of such poor habits did not critically effect a student at the primary and intermediate school years, they ultimately showed up during the junior high school years.

The lack of uniformity on the part of teachers regarding the use of homework was another contributing factor to the poor homework performance in the district. Was homework considered as a part of a grade or was it a learning tool? Again, a lack of consistency appeared to exist. In some classes homework was assigned as practice and drill and its completion did not contribute to a grade. In other classes, every homework assignment was collected and teachers recorded whether or not each student completed the assignment and handed it in. The assignment was

not necessarily corrected and returned in this case. Yet in other classrooms, one-third of the report card grade was derived from an average of all completed homework. Some teachers assigned homework nightly and had a great deal of success in having it completed by the majority of their students. These teachers collected the assignments the day they were due, read and corrected each paper and returned them with comments the next day. Other teachers had a great deal of difficulty in having just a few homework assignments completed and handed in. Many of the latter group had admittedly given up assigning homework. They felt important instructional time was spent on collecting homework and enforcing its completion. Despite the seriousness of the problem of homework in the district, the staff had devoted very little time to its resolution.

The deficiency notices appeared to have some short term effects. One difficulty, however, was that some students waited until notice of failure was received, then became motivated to hand in incomplete assignments, or requested additional work to gain extra credit. The problem with this situation was that the teacher was the one who took the initiative to notify

students of their deficiency, the teacher was the one contacting students and parents and the teacher was the one with the responsibility to see that one of the recommended solutions was followed. Such action on the part of the teacher was another occasion when someone else was assuming responsibility for the student. The Responsibility Sheets, although helpful to some, were also a short term solution. These weekly reports were sent to parents with little change from week to week. Homework continued to be missing or incomplete and parents and teachers could do little to change the situation.

Review of the Literature

Homework, its assignment, its completion and its assessment form a complex matrix from which positive or negative results can emanate, depending on the nature of the homework assignment. The topic of homework is as current as the controversy over nuclear energy. One would think that after so many years of discussion and a voluminous array of research articles that the controversy over homework would have dissipated. Interest in homework is so widespread

because its assignment in our schools affects a variety of persons; the students, the parents, teachers and friends of students and parents (Check, Ziebell, 1980).

In 1980 a National Assessment of Educational Progress gathered data on the TV viewing habits of nine, thirteen and seventeen year olds across the U.S. during its 1979-80 assessment of reading skills. In this survey, 21,208 9 year olds, 30,488 13 year old, and 25,551 17 year olds responded to questions about their backgrounds and to a wide range of items probing their reading comprehension skills. One finding of this survey significant to this report is that homework was not high on the list of teenagers' activities. About a third of the 13 and 17 year olds surveyed reported they do homework for an hour or more a day; 35% of the 13 year olds and 44% of the 17 year olds either had no homework assigned the previous day or did not do their assignments (Searls, D., Mead, N. and Ward, B., 1985).

Recent criticism of the American public schools has led to comparisons of our educational system with that of other countries. Several of the national reports critical of American education in the 1980's suggested homework as a way to strengthen

academic standards in the nation's schools. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) noted specifically that compared to students in other countries, especially Japan and Western Europe, American students spend much less time on school work. This finding has prompted many educators and parents to demand more homework for American students and to link homework with academic success (Paschal, R., Weinstein, T. and Walberg, H., 1984).

This review of current literature regarding homework will center on several important questions. Does homework improve academic progress? Is homework a desirable or necessary component of good teaching? What kind of homework improves grades? What homework policies are functional? How do parents feel about homework?

Homework and Academic Progress

One segment of the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress data published in 1984 indicated a positive relationship between the amount of time spent on homework and reading achievement in grades 4, 8, and 11. This assessment

focused on reading and writing and was administered to approximately 100,000 students across 30 states. In response to the question "How much time did you spend on homework yesterday?" almost two-thirds of the students reported spending time on homework with little variance among racial/ethnic groups. Compared with the 1980 survey cited above, this finding reflected more homework being assigned and an increase in the number who spent time on homework. Results showed that the more time students spent on homework assigned, the better they read; this relationship was clearest at grade 11. Seventy percent of the students who spent more than two hours on homework were found to watch two hours or less of television (Anderson, 1986).

Prior to this time, the majority of the literature about homework indicated there was inadequate research and research instruments to prove homework had a positive effect on academic progress. Check (1966) did a review of the literature on the effect of homework, quoting articles dated as early as 1926. Check states that the majority of the articles reported in journals are predominantly opinion articles, not experimental ones (Check, 1966). In an effort to contribute to this topic in both an empirical

and experimental fashion, he surveyed 1,016 people covering six diversely different populations. His respondents were elementary and junior high students, their parents and teachers, education majors at the college level and professors at the university level. Returns of the questionnaires were almost 100 per cent. A tabulation and analysis of the results showed that 1.) Students generally feel that homework assignments are necessary (80%), 2.) Parochial school students do not differ from public school students regarding homework, 3.) The majority of those students opposed to homework (20%) came from professional homes, 4.) An overwhelming majority of parents and educators surveyed believed homework was essential for academic success (Check, 1966). Although the results of Check's questionnaire showed that eighty per cent of the respondents wanted and expected homework in some fashion or another, and that most students want and expect outside-of-school assignments, his work did not show whether homework improved academic success.

A similar study was made by Kerzic (1966). This study was done to gain some information and insight into the way students feel about home study. Approximately 748 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders,

in a small Southern California intermediate school, were asked to answer several questions concerning homework. Among them was "Does homework in selected subjects (English, Social Studies, Math and Science) help students get better grades?" The findings of the study were as follows:

	<u>Does Not Help</u>	<u>Helps</u>
English	25%	75%
Social Studies	20%	80%
Math	30%	70%
Science	31%	69%

In yet another review of the literature on the effects of homework on academic progress, McDermott, Goldman and Varenne (1984), found only one study in which homework was attributed to being a motivating factor in the reading achievement of elementary students. Growth in reading achievement for approximately 400 intermediate-level students of varying socioeconomic backgrounds was studied. Assignments were individually developed by the teacher with respect to the student's academic ability and

needs, home environment, availability of resources, extracurricular activities and special interests. The researcher interviewed children in order to determine special-interest and home-environment features. The assignments were related to the subject matter of the school curriculum, but were completed totally outside the school environment. It was concluded that the individual enrichment assignments had a positive effect on reading behavior and reading achievement. The contention was that when students are motivated and interested in an assignment, they apply reading skills.

Walberg, Paschal and Weinstein (1985) did a synthesis of fifteen studies showing that much higher achievement results when homework is required, especially if it is graded or commented on. Their study found that the effects of homework on learning by elementary and secondary students are large and consistent. When homework is merely assigned without feedback from teachers it appears to raise, on average, the typical student at the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile. But when it is graded or commented upon, homework appears to raise learning from the 50th to the 79th percentile. This graded-homework-effect is among the largest ones discovered in educational research

literature (Walberg, 1984).

Gray and Allison (1970) attempted to find out if there were certain subject areas for which homework made a greater positive difference in academic progress than others. They limited their investigation to eight weeks with sixth graders, focusing on four fractional operations in sixth grade mathematics. They controlled the type and length of homework, then designed criterion tests to measure limited outcomes. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences in scores on fraction computation skills tests and on measures of understanding fractional concepts between pupils who had done regularly assigned practice homework and pupils who had not. These findings would indicate that drill homework is not as meaningful as was commonly believed.

A similar study in the area of mathematics was conducted including two specific skills: computation and problem solving. This study (Maertens and Johnston, 1972), was limited to six weeks, with a control on the type of homework (drill upon materials previously covered in class), but not the length. Three treatment groups were established; one which

received no homework, one which received per-problem knowledge of results, and one which received end-of-the-assignment knowledge of results. Similar to Gray and Allison, a criterion test was designed to measure limited outcomes. The results showed that those who did homework scored higher on the criterion tests than those who received no homework.

A third study involving 20,364 high school seniors used high school grades as the criterion measure rather than criterion test scores (Keith, 1982). The selected variables were; race, family background, ability, field of study, amount of time spent on homework and grades so far in high school. Keith found that with one to three hours of homework a week, a low-ability student could achieve grades comparable to students of average-ability who did no homework. He concluded that increased homework time resulted in higher achievement as measured by grades for all levels of ability, and homework also seemed to have compensatory effects.

Although over 20 years old, the classic study cited by almost every report on the effects of homework on academic progress was done by Goldstein (1960). Because it has made such an important contribution to

the subject addressed, the writer would be remiss not to include it in this review of the literature on the effects of homework on academic progress. His examination of the controversial subject of homework was stimulated by his interest as a parent of three school-age children, his experience as a teacher, and his concern as a scientist with the valid interpretation of experimental research findings. He examined 280 articles in an effort to answer the questions: Does homework contribute immediately and directly to achievement in the various subjects and does it contribute to academic proficiency through a long-term effect on study skills and attitudes? Goldstein found that of the 280 articles reviewed, 17 were experimental in nature and the remainder were opinion articles. He summarized his findings by stating that homework leads to higher academic achievement; that homework is more important at some grades than others, for some pupils than others; that homework develops independent work study skills; and finally, that there is no support in the research to indicate that homework had bad psychological effects.

An empirical study was done more recently by Natriello and McDill (1986). Using a sample of 12,146

students from 20 public schools, they attempted to define what determinants motivated students to make an effort to do homework and, in turn, the contribution of this effort to achievement. The results of this analysis provided tentative answers to these two major questions. On the one hand, teachers and peers set higher standards for students who appear to be more able to deal with a challenge, (students of high-ability, high expectations), while parents set higher standards for students who appear to be less able to deal with a challenge (students of low-ability, low educational expectations). The analysis of data addressing the effects of effort on performance shows that high standards set by teachers, parents, and peers also generate effort on homework. The standards set by these groups continued to affect homework even when various social background factors, parents' aspirations, students' expectations, and curriculum are controlled. Higher standards appear to generate greater student effort under a wide variety of conditions. The effect of high standards on achievement, however, is less consistent. Teachers' and peers' standards have a positive effect on English GPA, but parents' standards have a larger negative

effect. While the mediating effect of homework is positive in all three instances, the proportion of the effect that is mediated differs dramatically. School-based mediators (teachers and peers) are more likely to set high standards for students able to deal with a challenge, and these standards are more effective in generating effort on homework and higher achievement than the standards set by home-based evaluators (parents), which are more likely to be established for students less able to deal with a challenge.

In brief, a review of the literature on the effects of homework on academic success reveals a body of research which is outdated, inconsistent and out of touch with contemporary times. Some recent research does demonstrate there is empirical data to prove that homework has a positive affect on academic progress. In view of the tremendous interest and criticism of the American public school system, and the resulting demand for more scholastic oriented education for American youngsters, there is a great need to update the research of this vital area of education.

Homework That Succeeds

When Friesen (1979) reviewed 24 studies done

between 1923 and 1976, the results did not indicate strong support either for or against homework, but Friesen identified two important factors. First, in some cases, average and below average students did significantly better if given homework. Second, the value of homework depended on whether the teacher checked it for accuracy - when consequences were enforced, homework improved academic performance.

Similar findings were recorded by Paschal, Weinstein and Walberg (1984). The purpose of their synthesis of empirical studies made of various homework strategies on the academics and attitudes of elementary and secondary students was to determine what type of homework assignments produced the strongest effects. A significant dimension of their findings was in the area of defining the characteristics of effective homework assignments. Homework which was collected and returned with teacher comments and grades recorded on it, or which was an unusual or flexible approach to textbook exercises was characterized as an effective assignment.

Check and Ziebell (1980) offer a set of prescriptions to follow when planning and making homework assignments. 1.) **Personalize the homework assignment.** This requires the student to make out-of-

school contacts with people who are primary sources.

2.) Restraint in making the assignment is an admirable quality. More is not better. 3.) Long-range assignments are more purposeful than day-to-day lessons. The wise teacher will, however, announce a deadline for the completion of the assignment. 4.) The teachers in the system should coordinate their schedules. 5.) Relevancy is most important. The student needs to see value or purpose in his work. 6.) Instructions in making assignments must be meaningful and transferrable. 7.) As much as possible, homework lessons should be completed under the supervision of an adult. If the student should falter or need guidance, someone is around to give support and advice. 8.) Blanket assignments violate the practice of individualization. When a teacher makes a blanket assignment to the whole class, s/he is assuming every student is in need of the same practice and the same skill development. 9.) Homework demands that it be carefully evaluated and properly graded. 10.) Avoid "busy work" assignments. 11.) Do not use homework as a punishing or disciplinary device.

Lee and Pruitt (1979) classified assignments into one of four types: 1.) Practice - the most

common and simple type of assignment, given to help students master specific skills. These should be limited to material presented in class. 2.)

Preparation - given to prepare students to gain maximum benefit from subsequent lessons. 3.)

Extension - given to determine if the student can transfer new skills or concepts to a new situation. These assignments contain a greater degree of application and abstract thinking than practice assignments. 4.)

Creative - require students to integrate many skills and concepts in the process of producing a response. These take more time to complete (from several days to weeks).

Lee and Pruitt believe classroom assignments can produce gains in student achievement. They, too, present a set of characteristics of good assignments which are important for all four types. A well-prepared classroom assignment should meet each of the following criteria: 1.) The assignment should be related to meaningful learning outcomes which are perceived as meaningful by the students. 2.) The task required by the assignment yield maximum benefit for the student while minimizing excessive demands on student and teacher time. 3.) The assignment should

be clearly and thoroughly described. 4.) Each assignment should call for tasks which are within the ability range of students in the class.

LaConte (1981) later made Lee and Pruitt's classification more useful to teachers, by dividing homework into three categories: 1.) **Practice assignments** - to reinforce new skills and learnings. In spite of widespread use, practice assignments may be the least effective because they tend to be dull, mechanical, and given in blanket fashion to all students. 2.) **Preparation assignments** - designed to give students background information before topics appear in the classroom. 3.) **Extension assignments** - which take students beyond the class work. They tend to be more individualized and creative, involving skills over and above the topic.

Bauer (1987) says in order to be successful, homework should be engaging and interesting, while ensuring that it is moderately difficult. Tasks that are too easy increase the chance of hasty, inaccurate completion. Tasks that are too difficult may frustrate both students and the parents from whom they request help. Although the Forum of Educational Organization Leaders has recommended homework, the forum

nevertheless offers the following cautions (Strother, 1984): 1.) Increase the amount of homework only if students have appropriate places to study. 2.) Plan homework as carefully as classroom instruction. 3.) Provide teachers with smaller classes and adequate help to correct homework. 4.) Individualize homework assignments, including long as well as short-term projects; 5.) make assignments relevant, avoiding busywork; and 6.) Carefully evaluate or grade all homework.

Homework Policies

Homework, special projects, individual and committee reports, and library assignments often are considered within the realm of the classroom management and left to the discretion of the teacher. On the other hand, many schools find it desirable to develop specific policies in these areas. Whether the schools have formal written policies or simply follow established precedents, most schools follow the practice of using homework as a means of independent study. Not only do teachers apparently favor the use of homework as a teaching-learning technique for

students at the intermediate school age level, but parents also seem to approve and to expect that children will be given regular home study assignments. As a result, the instructional policies of many intermediate and middle schools not only provide guidelines for homework assignments, but also state that homework is expected and required (Kindred, 1968).

Early in the year, parents need and want to know the school's and teacher's homework policy. Schools should share concrete guidelines about their expectations for each child. In a letter home, the purposes of homework should be listed, what the school says is appropriate for each grade level, approximately how much homework a child will be expected to do nightly and weekly, and how parents can help (Bergstrom, 1985).

One of the most extensive studies of homework policies was done by Bond and Smith (1966) when they attempted to demonstrate the need for better homework guidelines in 77 school districts in New York State. First, the results of the study showed that 29 percent of the districts had no written homework policy, and 44 percent had an unwritten one. After reviewing the 27 percent who did have formal written policies, their

conclusions were: 1.) Current homework practices did not harmonize with research related to sound principles of teaching and learning. 2.) Differences among individual pupils were ignored. Half of the districts reported they gave the same assignments to each child in the class, regardless of his/her individual intelligence or capacity. 3.) Half of the districts gave reading assignments as homework, a practice directly opposed to the recommendations of almost every U.S. reading specialist. 4.) Homework involving research and independent study was assigned in only 15 percent of the districts. 5.) In only one-third of the districts did teachers systematically correct, grade, and return assignments to pupils. Bond and Smith claim these problems are typical of many of the problems regarding homework in schools throughout the United States.

A Pennsylvania survey (1971), reported similar findings. Ten state education departments throughout the nation responded that they did not have a written philosophy or position paper on homework. Sixty-two percent of the chief school administrators in Pennsylvania revealed that they had no written policy (Knorr, 1981).

Lack of homework policy frustrates students and parents. The absence of a policy leads to uneven and uncoordinated demands on students (Coulter, 1980). On the other hand, a policy with too much specificity inhibits teachers and students and often puts undo pressures on parents, students and teachers. Such policies are so detailed, they designate the required number of hours to be spend on homework at each grade level as well as the subject areas which require homework each night (Kindred, 1968).

Homework and the Home

The amount, quality and usefulness of homework is jointly determined by teachers, parents and students. If one of the three legs of the homework stool is unsupportive, little may be accomplished academically in the large amount of time students spend outside of school. Without community and parental support, teachers by themselves cannot press homework very far. One of the factors that contemporary research is now considering is the changing sociological condition of the family. About one-third of all American children will witness the dissolution of their parents' marriage and the percentage of

mothers with school-age children in the work force was 56% in 1981 (Walberg, Paschal, and Weinstein, 1985). These statistics show that family life has changed considerably since the 1960's when the bulk of research on the efficacy of homework was written. Despite these figures, however, the influence of the "curriculum of the home" in children's learning is decisive. According to Walberg and associates, parent-child conversations about everyday events, encouragement and discussion of leisure reading, monitoring and joint analysis of televiewing, deferral of immediate gratification to accomplish long-term goals, expressions of affection and interest in the child's academic and personal growth, result in the overlapping of the home and school curriculum and the multiplication of one another's effects.

In the 29 controlled studies of programs where the school staff and parents worked together to improve the home curriculum or the academically stimulating environment for learning, 91 percent of the comparisons favored enrolled children over control groups. Although the average effect was twice that of social class, some programs had effects 10 times as large. The successful home intervention programs

sometimes involved home visits by teachers, coordinated school and home efforts to raise the amount and quality of child study, social support, materials and procedures for parents to tutor and encourage their children at home (Walberg, et. al.).

As parent-school programs sprouted in schools across the country, so, too, did research efforts to test their effectiveness. In a few studies, homework became one of the central variables for describing the relationship between home environments and school achievement. As part of one large study of the sustaining effects of compensatory education programs with parents, home environment and household data were gathered from 14,157 families with children in elementary school. Homework activities as reported by parents were measured in terms of bringing homework home frequently, obtaining frequent help with homework, spending more time on homework than the average, and having others besides the parents assist with the homework. All of these activities turned out to be negatively related to achievement in both reading and math (McDermott, Goldman, Varenne, 1984).

In a recent Gallup Poll, 46 percent of parents said they regularly helped elementary-age

children with homework. This is up from 1977 when only 37 percent claimed to offer a helping hand (Featherstone, 1985). McDermott (1982) observed 12 blue-collar households in 1982 and found families reshaping their activities around homework in every case. Concern over the radical change in children's home conditions over the years has led many educators to oppose homework. Educators assumed that because of poverty, lack of education, stress, need for privacy and leisure, parents opposed homework (Featherstone, 1985). Chandler and Snow (1985) recently observed 26 blue-collar parents helping their elementary school children with homework-like tasks and found that the parents assisted in appropriate ways. In interviews, a majority of the children judged their parents' contributions useful, although one-third of them complained that they were "usually confusing."

Perhaps some of the confusion over homework is due to the fact that parents and school people do not always see eye to eye on what homework is supposed to accomplish and then students see it a third way. In 1969 a survey was conducted in New England in an effort to study the value of homework in the elementary grades. The respondents were 58 superintendents, 90

principals, 94 teachers, 1,480 parents, and 2,692 students. They were asked to rank in order of preference 14 reasons for homework's value. The results demonstrated a basic disagreement between educators and parents on the best kind of homework, with parents favoring brief, nightly assignments and educators supporting long-range projects. Both educators and parents identified the same reasons for the value of homework. Savage (1969) compared the percent of parents and educators who found certain commonly stated reasons for homework valid and the order of reasons most frequently chosen by each group. The four reasons considered valid by the majority of parents alike, although not in the same order were:

Reason	% of Parents	% of Educators
Develops children's initiative and responsibility.	76.7%	86.7%
Provides necessary practice for skills learned in school.	71.3%	78.9%
Develops research skills.	69.9%	81.4%
Creates opportunities for independent planning.	67.3%	83.0%
Prepares for high school.	65.7%	57.4%
Helps children do better on exams.	59.7%	42.1%

The largest area of difference was regarding homework's value in preparing students for high school. There was no point on which there was equal agreement among parents and school personnel. Savage concludes that the lack of agreement among parents and educators on the value of homework requires that the purpose of homework needs clarification if it is to remain an effective learning tool.

Featherstone (1985) says that students say that doing homework helps them to learn new material and to get better grades. Adults insist that it builds character. She asked parents and adults what they believed to be the most important benefit of homework, 78 percent of parents and 88 percent of teachers and principals in one study agreed that homework develops children's initiative and responsibility. Other surveys gave similar results: grown-ups hope homework will strengthen skills but they praise self-discipline and independent study habits as its most important fruits.

In a 1983 study conducted in 16 Maryland elementary school districts, it was discovered that low achievers (in math and reading) spent more time doing homework and got more minutes of parent help, and their

teachers more frequently asked parents to become involved in learning activities at home. The conclusion of the study was that children who are already doing well in school spend less time on homework and need less help from parents (Epstein 1983). Epstein asserts that "children who like to talk about school and homework with a parent and children who are not tense about working with the parent on home learning activities have higher reading and math scores and are more often considered homework 'stars.'" In her sample of elementary school students about 20% did not like to talk about school with their parents, and 35% got tense working with their parents on homework. Homework is often the only form of serious communication about school and learning between parents and their school-age children (Epstein, 1983). LaConte believes that despite protests of annoyance from parents, they are flattered and feel important when their children ask them to help with homework and also feel closer to their children. Sometimes this feeling of closeness transfers to the teacher and school as well (LaConte, 1981).

There are some who believe homework should be abolished altogether, especially at the Junior High

level (Jones and Calvin, 1964). This solution is recommended because of the inability of most families to provide proper conditions to do homework at home; lack of privacy, T.V., etc. The proponents of "no homework" believe that without school related homework children would be able to take part in wholesome afterschool activities (clubs, music lessons, household chores, hobbies, part-time work). Substituting schoolwork for REAL homework puts the responsibility for teaching on the school where it belongs and the responsibility of the home on the family. Jones and Calvin proposed the abolition of homework in 1964. The social-economical conditions of the average family have changed radically and their theory is not relevant today.

Summary

In the current debate on school reform the issue of homework comes up again and again. Proponents of higher standards lament the failure of teachers to assign enough homework, while others question whether increased out-of-school academic time will increase learning. The review of the literature indicates that this debate has been going on for decades. Because of

insufficient empirical data to prove one side or the other, the debate continues. The use of homework in the schools has been an evolutionary process. For years homework has been a school tradition - one that has survived waves of enthusiasm as well as waves of disenchantment.

Does the review of the literature prove that homework causes greater academic success? As Goldstein indicates, during the 1960's, numerous articles about homework were published, mostly based on opinion, rather than empirical research. As a body of literature, the articles were useful in addressing several issues concerning the advantages and disadvantages of homework rather than proving whether or not homework really did what the advantages claimed. Most of the articles were inconclusive and contradictory. One concluded that homework leads to higher achievement, while the second disputed the idea and concluded that there was little evidence available for making any conclusions concerning the relationship of homework to achievement.

The confusion about the efficacy of homework is evidenced by the dearth of literature written between the 1960's and 1980's. Very little was found

regarding the topic during these decades. Such names as Goldstein and McGill who did research on the validity of homework in the 1950's still appear in contemporary literature. With today's emphasis on renewed educational vigor, homework assignments are back on the increase, and the public, including the government and private industry, are demanding even more. Walberg's work reflects the new research in the field of homework and his findings indicate that homework does in fact contribute to higher achievement, under certain conditions.

This leads to the second question regarding homework; what kind of assignments succeed? In response to this question, three common themes reoccur throughout the literature: 1.) homework that is collected, graded and commented on boosts achievement (Jongsma, Turvey, Walberg, et. al., Check and Ziebell, Bauer). 2.) Homework that is given considering individual differences boosts achievement (Check and Ziebell, Jackson and Pruitt, Turvey, Jongsma, Featherstone) and 3.) Assignments should be clearly and thoroughly described (Check and Ziebell, Jackson and Pruitt, Turvey, Jongsma). In addition to these themes, others were found; good homework assignments

are not those given to a class as a punishment (Bauer, Check and Ziebell), and assignments related to meaningful learning outcomes which are perceived as meaningful by the students are usually completed by students (Lee and Pruitt, Check and Ziebell, McDermott, et. al.). Assignments are considered successful when the entire class completes and hands in the assignment and a review of the assignment indicates either some learning took place by the student or the teacher learns what the student needs to know.

The literature shows that homework policies are valid and necessary to provide consistency between classes and communication between home and school. Lack of a policy frustrates students and parents. In the absence of a policy, teachers must decide on their own what to do about homework. Unsubmitted, incomplete, or late assignments, as well as homework evaluation, the use of assignments in determining grades, and cheating all pose problems to teachers. The only way to make objectives of homework clear for administrators, teachers, students and especially parents, is to draw up a comprehensive homework policy that reflects differing purposes. Teachers must have a policy to guide them in their assignments. Children

need to know what to expect. Parents have the right to guidance from the school on the goals, requirements and results of homework for their children.

The research demonstrates that the role of homework in building a closer relationship between parent and child as well as school and parent is undisputed. The fear on the part of the school to intrude and disrupt the family has recently caused many teachers to eliminate homework from their teaching methodology. Elementary school assignments, however, tell parents what the school teaches and how well their child copes with its demands. The school sets the terms of the nightly homework drama and in doing so influences the climate of the entire household. Although the majority of parents and students approve of homework and even expect it, the rationale for homework given by parents does not correlate with the rationale of the school.

The controversy over homework is bound to continue for many years. Clear, well-designed, empirical research is needed to examine and study the many variables that affect and perhaps even control the influence of homework on student learning. Research into the etiology and remedy of student failure to

complete homework is probably a good place to begin.

CHAPTER III
ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

One result of the present "back to basics" movement in education is a renewed interest in homework. This revival is spearheaded by teachers and parents seeking solutions to declining test scores and poor academic achievement. Regardless of the contradictions in research, the school in which this practicum took place is committed to the belief that homework is a means of increasing academic success and a lack of homework is a major cause for low report card grades, particularly at the junior high level. As a result, the first goal of this practicum was to decrease the number of notices of failure issued each marking quarter and therefore increase the number of students who complete and return homework assignments. The second goal was closely related to the first; to increase the number of students who complete homework in the specific subject areas of Social Studies and English. The third goal was to have the school board adopt a homework policy which will incorporate the characteristics of good homework. In order to write a

policy which was acceptable and relevant to the majority of people affected by it, parents, students and teachers were to have input in formulating the policy.

Behavioral Expectations

An analysis of the literature convinced the writer that homework is necessary for students for a wide variety of reasons. In the case of the district in question, homework is related to report card grades. The first objective, therefore, was chosen to meet that immediate end. The second objective was to improve homework performance in the two subject areas in which homework was completed the least; Social Studies and Science. Finally, since the homework policy in the district addressed in this practicum was in need of revision, the third objective was intended to address this problem.

1. Over a period of 7 months, the number of deficiencies issued to junior high students due to lack of homework will decline by 50% as measured by a comparison of numbers of deficiency notices issued before and after the implementation period.

2. Over a period of 7 months, students will increase their performance in completing Social Studies and English homework by 75% as measured by a comparison of deficiency notices issued.
3. Over a period of 7 months, a viable homework policy supported by 80% of the parents, students and staff, as measured by the results of a questionnaire will be adopted by the governing board and recorded in board minutes.

Evaluation Instruments

The first objective was measured by a comparison of the numbers of students who received deficiency notices (Appendix A) during each marking period of the implementation phase, with those notices received last year. The school year is divided into four nine week periods, with report cards issued every nine weeks. Deficiency notices are sent home in the middle of the quarter, approximately during the fifth week. It was hoped that by the end of the third marking quarter, fewer deficiencies would be issued for lack of homework and more students would be receiving passing grades. The second objective was also measured by the analysis of the numbers of deficiency notices issued to sixth, seventh and eighth graders in Social

Studies and English.

The third objective was measured by tallying the results of a questionnaire completed by teachers, parents and students (Appendix C, D, E). The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain the opinion of all parties regarding a recommended homework policy prior to the board's adoption. Once a policy was written based on the collaboration of students, parents and staff, the governing board was requested to adopt it and teachers were expected to conform to the policy.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

The practicum undertaken involved a wide range of persons, reaching out into the community (school board), the home (parents) and returning to the school (students and staff). Any project encompassing such a wide scope was bound to encounter unexpected occurrences. Once the staff began to implement the proposed homework policy in their classrooms, many new questions and situations arose which needed to be discussed. Suggested solutions needed to be recorded. The individual problems the staff encountered were varied. In order to record these unexpected events, the writer kept a log of questions and problems which

arose and then shared them with the staff at weekly meetings. The subject areas generating the greatest discussion were Social Studies and English. Teachers worked cooperatively in recommending solutions for increasing homework performance in these two areas. Shortly after the implementation period, it was discovered the problem of incomplete homework assignments in Social Studies continued at the same rate as previously. Teachers recommended the Social Studies notebooks be checked by the teacher each week and a weekly grade be given. This motivated students to keep their notebooks current. It was also suggested that the number of assignments given be less frequent and of greater depth.

One unexpected event which had an impact on student homework performance was the institution of class sizes of approximately 20 students in all grades. This allowed staff to correct and return papers to students within a shorter period of time. It also afforded opportunity for teachers to individualize assignments to meet the needs of students. The events recorded in the log gave documentation to solutions and provided information for the governing board as they considered adoption of the new homework policy.

<u>THE END RESULT</u>	<u>EVALUATION TOOL</u>	<u>STANDARD OF ACHIEVEMENT</u>
1. Increase in homework performance	Deficiency notices	75% decline in notices issued by end of third marking period
2. Decrease in failures in Social Studies and English	Deficiency notices	80% decline in notices issued by end of third marking period
3. A valid homework policy adopted by Governing Board	Survey of parents, teachers and students	80% acceptance of policy by students, parents and governing board

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The debate regarding the efficacy of homework has continued primarily because the completion of out-of-school assignments by students has been a problem for decades. If students were routinely doing homework assignments and turning them in to the satisfaction of the school, the legitimacy of homework would be a moot question. Since the district in which this practicum took place is similar to others across the country, incomplete homework assignments are an issue that must be addressed.

A review of the literature provides a wealth of information to either support or deny the validity of homework. The unwritten belief, not overtly stated in the literature, however, is that homework will be and should be given in schools, especially articles written since 1983. The one issue not addressed in the majority of the literature is how to motivate students to complete homework.

Dillman (1987) tells of one method she used

with a bright but unmotivated junior high student. After talking with parents about the problem, Dillman decided she had little parental support and would have to solve the problem herself. She wrote a contract for the student stating that he would do his homework every day and turn it in on time. If he didn't, he would get a zero for the work. The student agreed to sign. In the following months, the student continued to do well on classroom tests. From time to time, he even participated in discussions. But despite the contract, he never turned in a shred of homework. It was not until he was told by the high school guidance counselors that he lacked three credits to advance to 10th grade that he began to do homework.

In the school addressed in this practicum, several attempts had been made to motivate students to complete and turn in homework. The first was, of course, the old remedy of afterschool detention. The purpose of the detention was to give students time to do their incomplete or late homework assignment and turn it in before going home. In more cases than not, students wasted the afterschool time or when they did complete homework, they failed to hand it in. The afterschool detention program only created power

struggles between the detention monitor who demanded the student do homework and the student who procrastinated.

Since parents often claimed they did not receive the deficiency notices and were not aware students were failing until report cards were received, the school changed its policy regarding notices. Prior to the change, students were handed the notices and trusted to take them home, have parents sign them and return them to their homeroom teacher. Students who received the greatest number of deficiencies never showed them to parents, signed the notice themselves and returned them. The staff and administration decided to mail the deficiencies to make certain parents received them. This helped considerably, but obviously, not enough.

As stated earlier, at one time the administrator met privately with each student who received a deficiency notice. The purpose of the conference was to reinforce the seriousness of failure, to review standardized tests scores with the student, and to help the student formulate a plan on how to pass. It was discovered in these conferences that the majority of students had not reviewed their test scores

and were not aware of their own potential. For many of these students, their standardized test scores were on grade level or above, yet they were failing regularly. The conferences proved to be somewhat effective, but the numbers of students not completing homework did not drop significantly to warrant the principal to devote several days to the task.

The Parent-Student Handbook lists steps parents can take to help their child with homework at home. Among them is the recommendation to provide a private, quiet place for study. Many students indicated they lived in small, overcrowded mobile homes, affording little privacy. To assist these students, the school provided a voluntary, afterschool study hall. Students were free to go to the hall, complete homework, then take the activity bus home or report to athletics. The hall was monitored by a teacher whose role was to supervise and assist students with assignments. Because it was voluntary, the study hall was popular. However, the newness wore off and within two months, a hand-full of students took advantage of the opportunity. The study hall was continued for those few for the duration of the year, but discontinued the next year.

At one time, the staff considered forming a "homework hotline" in the evening, allowing students who had questions regarding an assignment to call and get help. It was decided, however, that since the majority of the teachers (90%) lived out of town and phone calls were long distance calls, the cost would be prohibitive.

The final step taken by the practicum school to increase the number of students who completed homework, was to work with those "hardcore" cases who were consistently failing because of lack of performance, but were mentally superior in ability. The parents and student were called in for a meeting with the entire junior high staff and principal. The purpose of the meeting was to share what the staff perceived to be the students' social, emotional and academic strengths and weaknesses. Based on this profile, the staff expressed their concern regarding the student's academic progress. With the parents consent and support, the student's homework patterns, preparedness for class and conduct was monitored on a weekly basis. The progress of the child was recorded individually by each teacher on a simple "Responsibility Sheet" (Appendix B), and mailed home

each Friday. Again, in most cases the procedure appeared to make some impact and progress was seen. After a period of time, however, the old patterns set in and parents and teachers were at a loss as to what to do next.

In an effort to strengthen communication between the school and home in the absence of a Parent-Teacher Association, the administration began a monthly program called "The Parent's Forum". The program was to provide an educational and social opportunity for parents. Topics such as School-Home Programs, Parent-Child Communication, Substance Abuse, Sex Education were addressed by outside speakers once a month. The program had no strings attached. Parents were encouraged to come to socialize, listen to a topic of interest and share refreshments. True to form, the first meeting brought the greatest number of parents, then attendance dwindled to the point where for the last meeting only the administrator and the speaker showed-up.

Most recently, the district sponsored "Parent-Nurturing" classes in conjunction with the local Community Behavioral Health Center. These classes were to provide parenting skills for parents

who felt out of control. Because of the association with the Behavior Health Center some were hesitant to participate for fear they would be labeled as incompetent parents. The few who did attend the classes did derive a great deal out of the classes. These numbers, however, only scratched the surface of the need.

The staff and administration addressed the severe problem with homework three years ago. It was at this time that the current homework policy was written. The policy was the closing project in a workshop on study skills. In these sessions, such items as uniformity in labeling papers, writing down assignments, homework calenders were addressed. In the three years since that workshop, the uniformity established has deteriorated and few follow the policy established.

A Description of Selected Solutions

The review of the literature lead the writer to believe the solution to the problem was a three-step program. First, staff and administration had to work together to formulate a homework policy which was workable. In formulating the policy they had to

address the following issues:

1. Does the homework address a real educational purpose?
2. Does it fit the immediate needs of the child?
Should assignments indicate what skill they are addressing?
3. How does the district feel about assigning homework as a punishment?
4. How can teachers assure that the assignment is thoroughly understood before it is assigned?
5. How will the district explain homework to parents?
6. How will homework be checked by teacher?
7. Will homework be included in report card grades?
8. How often should homework be given?
9. How long should students be expected to spend on homework each night?
10. What are the consequences of incomplete and late assignments?
11. Should it be mandated that all homework is corrected and commented on before it is returned?

It was believed that if a policy addressed each of these issues it would be comprehensive enough to provide guidelines for everyone concerned. Teachers in the areas of Social Studies and English, in

particular, examined what they could do to make assignments more relevant, easier to follow and fit the ability of each student. They addressed the following questions:

1. Are assignments too long?
2. Are both teachers giving homework on the same nights, creating a tremendous burden on the students?
3. How can teachers work together to assure that long-range assignments in both subjects are not due at the same time?
4. Are instructions covered thoroughly and clearly? When necessary, is a demonstration on how to do the assignments given?
5. Is the assignment relevant to what is being learned or is it busy work?
6. Are assignments collected, corrected and commented on then returned?
7. What are the types of assignments typically given in each subject; practice, preparation, or extension?
8. Are assignments individualized? Are those students not handing in assignments those who have difficulty in language arts?

9. Are there specific study skills necessary for their subject areas which need to be taught to students?

The second step was to implement the policy once it was written in an effort to test its validity. Following a five month period of implementation, the parents, students and staff were asked to respond to a questionnaire designed to determine the strengths and weakness of the policy. Is what is happening in compliance with the policy? Is the policy realistic in its expectations? Are teachers adhering to it?

The third and final step was to have the policy adopted by the governing board and become enforced throughout the district. This step was not to take place until the results of the homework questionnaire were compiled and any necessary revisions made based on the questionnaire results. During the first quarter of the school year, the writer held grade level meetings with parents, sharing with them the curriculum presented at each grade level, the school expectations as spelled out in the Parent-Student Handbook and especially homework expectations. At this meeting parents were encouraged to share their concerns and questions regarding current homework

policy and make recommendations for change. They were also informed of the pending homework policy questionnaire to be sent out during the third quarter of the school year.

Time-line

During the pre-school inservice program for teachers in September, the writer shared with the staff the findings of the review of the literature regarding the impact of homework on academic achievement, homework policies, and parent involvement in homework. It was at this meeting that the foundation was laid for future work on homework. By the end of September, the staff and administration formulated a proposed homework policy to be implemented from October to March. During this five month period, a record was kept of the number of deficiency notices issued during the first, second and third marking periods, especially in the areas of Social Studies and English. If there was no significant change in numbers in Social Studies and English deficiencies, a second meeting was to be held with the teachers of those subjects in order to reevaluate the solutions to the problem.

In October, Parent-Teacher grade-level

meetings were conducted for all grades, (grade three through eight). The purpose of the meetings were to familiarize parents with the school curriculum, school programs and the proposed homework policy. The expectations of the school regarding homework were made clear: the purpose of homework, how often homework would be given, how long a child should spend on homework, the consequences for not completing homework. Recommendations were given to parents on how they can assist their child at home: 1.) provide a quiet time and place for homework, 2.) establish a routine time for homework each night, and 3.) check child's homework when it is completed.

At the end of the third marking period in March, parents, student and staff questionnaires were distributed, collected and tallied. Based on the results, revisions in the proposed policy were made, prior to submitting the policy to the governing board for adoption in April.

A total of 28 teachers, 18 classroom teachers servicing students in grades three through eight, and 10 support staff members were included in the formulation of the policy. It was the belief of the writer that one of the reasons for a decline in

writer that one of the reasons for a decline in homework completion in Social Studies and English was that teachers in the early elementary grades did not typically give homework in these two areas. As a rule, these two content areas require more writing than Math or Science and are therefore ignored. In many cases, Social Studies is not seriously taught and English as grammar is not formally taught until the fifth grade. Parents and students of all grades in the school (grades three through eight) were included in the questionnaire phase. Although the seventh and eighth grade students were monitored for the purposes of this practicum, it was the intention of the writer that the results of the practicum would have an influence on the entire school.

CHAPTER V
RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The district homework policy was revised in an effort to decrease the number of students failing because of incomplete homework assignments. The staff defined seven statements to express the philosophy of the district toward homework:

1. There must be a real educational purpose for homework.
2. Homework must meet a specific educational need.
3. Homework should not be assigned for punishment.
4. Homework should be thoroughly understood by a child before it is assigned.
5. Homework must be checked by a teacher.
6. It should not be assigned more than two or three days a week.
7. Assignments should take about thirty minutes of a child's time.

Teachers implemented the policy for a period of seven months. Parents, students and teachers were then surveyed to determine the effectiveness and overall acceptance of the policy statements.

The policy revision resulted in a significant decline in deficiency notices issued to students due to lack of homework. The percentage of decline varied among subjects. The students increased their homework performance in Social Studies and English by 50 percent. Parents, students and teachers overwhelmingly supported the revised homework policy after its implementation period.

Both objective one, to increase homework performance, and objective two, to decrease failures in Social Studies and English, were measured by a comparison of the numbers of deficiency notices (Appendix A) issued at the junior high level before and after the implementation period. Because Social Studies and English were the subject areas showing the greatest number of incomplete homework assignments, special note was made of the number of deficiencies issued for incomplete assignments in those two areas. Deficiency notices were issued five weeks prior to the end of each of the four marking periods. This gave students an opportunity to improve their grades by making up outstanding assignments. Table 5 shows the comparison of deficiency notices issued in each subject at the end of the third quarter marking period

in 1988 (Table 1) and 1989.

Table 5

Comparison of Number of Deficiencies Distributed
1987-88

Total Number of Students:

1987-88:	7th Grade = 57	1988-89:	7th Grade = 63
	8th Grade = 61		8th Grade = 57

Subject:	Math	Rd'g	Sci	SoSt	Eng	Mu	PE	Art	Total
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7th Grade:

1987-1988	25	33	20	49	50	12	14	0	203
1988-1989	13	9	16	28	23	0	5	1	95

8th Grade:

1987-1988	29	33	17	50	44	13	20	1	207
1988-1989	1	13	15	10	11	0	6	1	57

Totals:

1987-1988	54	66	37	99	94	25	34	1	410
1988-1989	14	22	31	38	34	0	11	2	152

The subject areas showing the greatest decline in the numbers of students failing because of a lack of homework and incomplete assignments were Social Studies and English. Reading and Mathematics also showed a significant decline, with Science showing an increase in the number of deficiency notices issued.

Objective three, the measurement of acceptance of the proposed policy, was accomplished by an analysis of a survey of three groups; parents, teachers and

students (Appendix C). A total of 335 students in grades 3-8 were surveyed, with 297 students responding. The same number of parents were polled, representing approximately 175 families, with 167 responding. All 25 staff members in grades 3-8 surveyed. Table 6 are a comparison in responses between parents and teachers regarding their agreement with the policy statements.

Table 6.

Parent-Teacher Response to Policy Items

Total Number of Parents Responding = 167

Total Number of Teachers Responding = 25

		<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
1. Educational purpose.	Parents:	161	6
	Teachers:	24	1
2. Meet educational need.	Parents:	158	9
	Teachers:	25	0
3. Not a punishment.	Parents:	137	30
	Teachers:	24	1
4. Understood by child.	Parents:	165	2
	Teachers:	25	0
5. Checked by teacher.	Parents:	165	2
	Teachers:	24	1
6. Not more than 2-3 days a week.	Parents:	136	31
	Teachers:	20	5
7. Not longer than 30 min.	Parents:	134	33
	Teachers:	23	2

There is strong agreement between parents and

teachers that homework should have a real educational purpose and that it should meet a specific educational need. It is also generally agreed between the two groups that the educational concept should be thoroughly understood by a child before it is assigned and then checked by the teacher after it is collected. A difference worth noting is a larger number of parents than teachers agreed that homework should be given as a punishment. Another significant difference is in items six and seven. Of those parents who disagree that homework should not be given more than two or three times a week, 15 indicated assignments should be given more often, two stated it should be given less often, and 14 gave no explanation. Of the numbers who disagreed with the statement that assignments should take about thirty minutes of a child's time, 18 indicated a child should spend more than thirty minutes, one stated the time should be less than thirty minutes, while 13 gave no indication of an appropriate length of time.

Table 7 shows a comparison between parents and teachers regarding what grade level homework should begin to play a part in a child's educational experience.

Table 7

Grade Level at Which Homework Should be Introduced

Number of Parents Responding = 167

Number of Teachers Responding = 25

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
Kdg.	12	2
1	43	6
2	20	3
3	50	11
4	22	2
5	15	1
6	2	0
7	3	0
8	0	0

There appears to be a wide range of difference between both groups regarding the grade level at which homework should be introduced. The highest area of agreement is at the third grade level, with the lowest number of teachers voting for the first grade and the lowest number of parents selecting kindergarten.

Both parents and teachers were asked to indicate the average number of minutes a child is expected to spend on homework each night. Table 8 shows the survey results.

Table 8.

Appropriate Number of Minutes a Night to be Spent on Homework

Number of Parents Responding: 167

Number of Teachers Responding: 25

Grade	Minutes:	30	60	90	120	120+
3	Parents:	131	2	0	0	0
	Teachers:	22	3	0	0	0
4	Parents:	129	9	0	0	0
	Teachers:	24	1	0	0	0
5	Parents:	112	29	1	0	0
	Teachers:	19	6	0	0	0
6	Parents:	78	54	7	2	0
	Teachers:	14	10	1	0	0
7	Parents:	46	65	25	6	0
	Teachers:	8	10	7	0	0
8	Parents:	42	68	19	14	0
	Teachers:	0	14	9	2	0

Both groups generally agreed with the number of minutes which should be devoted to homework nightly at the intermediate levels (3-6), but show similarities in agreement regarding the junior high level. There was some indication that parents expected more homework assigned than teachers felt was appropriate. Table 9 shows a comparison between parents' and childrens' perception of how many minutes a night are actually spent on homework assignments.

Table 9

Actual Number of Minutes Spent on Homework Daily

Number of Parents Responding = 167

Number of Students Responding = 297

Grade	Minutes:	0	30	60	90	120	120+
3	Parents:	0.1%	14%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Students:	0.0%	16%	0.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
4	Parents:	1.7%	10%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Students:	0.0%	12.5%	1.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
5	Parents:	1.2%	16.8%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Students:	0.3%	13.5%	2.7%	1.3%	0.6%	0.3%
6	Parents:	0.0%	12.6%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Students:	0.0%	11.4%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
7	Parents:	0.3%	6.6%	1.8%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
	Students:	0.0%	4.7%	7.7%	3.7%	1.0%	1.0%
8	Parents:	1.8%	4.2%	2.4%	1.2%	0.6%	0.6%
	Students:	0.0%	4.4%	4.4%	3.7%	0.1%	1.3%
Totals: Parents:		6.6%	65.3%	11.4%	3.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Students:		0.3%	62.6%	20.5%	10.1%	2.7%	3.7%

It is clear from Table 9 that there is a great disparity between what parents and students perceive to be the actual amount of time spent on homework nightly. Table 10 shows how students feel about the amount of homework assigned.

Table 10

How Students Feel About Amount of Homework Assigned

Number of Students Responding = 297

<u>Question</u>	<u>% of Respondents</u>
Amount assigned is too much:	26.6%
Amount assigned is too little:	9.5%
Amount assigned is just right:	63.9%
Total:	100.0%

Despite the fact that Table 9 shows that 37% of the students indicate they spend over 60 minutes a night on homework, Table 10 demonstrates that the majority of students surveyed believe the amount of homework assigned is adequate. Next, Table 11 shows the types of assistance parents provide for their children during the performance of homework.

Table 11

Types of Homework Assistance Provided by Parents

Number of Parents Responding = 167

<u>Type of Assistants</u>	<u>%</u>
A. Assist directly	72.5%
B. Encourage as needed	85.1%
C. No help should be given	2.4%
D. Establish time and place for homework	73.7%

It was of great interest to the staff that only 2.4% of the parents polled indicated no help should be given. The large number of parents responding to the other three types of assistance showed the teachers that parents wish to be involved in their children's learning and become actively involved when possible.

One of the major considerations given by the staff when formulating the policy, was the type of homework given. It was agreed that homework should be meaningful, not "busy work", should have a specific educational goal, and should provide opportunity for study and drill. Long-range research assignments and reports were frequently assigned at the junior high level. These were the types of assignments which were least likely to be handed in on time. Table 12 shows what parents, teachers and students consider to be beneficial types of homework assignments.

Table 12

Types of Homework Assignments Believed to be Most Beneficial

Number of Respondents: Parents = 167			
Students = 297			
Teachers = 25			
Type of Assignments	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
A. Complete class assignments:	150	111	22
B. New assignments:	102	77	16
C. Reports:	92	88	20
D. Study for tests:	167	161	24
E. Drill:	53	83	18

Parents and students both indicated they believe that studying for tests as a purpose for homework was very beneficial. Both groups voted for more than one type of assignment, while teachers included every type. Students were also questioned regarding their study habits, namely the atmosphere in which they study. Seventy-four percent of the parents indicated they believed that one of their major roles at home was to provide their child with a place and time to study. Table 13 shows the type of environment in which students study.

Table 13.

Homework Environment

 Number of students polled = 297

<u>Type of Environment</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
A. Special place to do homework provided.	58.3%	41.7%
B. Watch TV while doing homework.	39.4%	60.6%
C. Listen to radio/stereo during homework.	62.0%	38.0%
D. Parents help with homework.	88.9%	11.1%

A lower percentage of students than anticipated indicated they do not watch television while doing homework, while a high percentage show they listen to the radio or stereo during homework performance. Contrary to the belief of the staff, most parents indicated that they provide a quiet place for their child to do homework. A very positive note is that 95% of the students indicated they receive some type of support or attention from parents while doing homework. Teachers and parents believe that in order for homework to be academically productive, teachers must collect, correct and return assignments. Table 14 shows the number of students who stated homework assignments were corrected by their teachers and returned.

Table 14

Percentages of Students Who Have Homework Corrected and Returned

Total Number of Students Responding = 297

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>
Homework is corrected	60.9%	3.4%	35.7%

Finally, all three groups surveyed were asked if they believed homework performance made a positive contribution toward academic progress. Table 15 shows the results.

Table 15

Does Homework Make a Contribution Toward Academic Performance

Number Responding: Students = 279
 Parents = 167
 Teachers = 25

<u>Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>
Students	192	30	75
Parents	164	4	0
Teachers	24	1	0

After the survey results were analyzed, it was evident that parents, teachers and students agreed with the policy statements. The implementation of the policy over a seven month period of time did result in

a decline in academic deficiencies. The results of the survey were then shared with the governing board and the policy approved.

Conclusions

The process of evaluating and revising the district homework policy and receiving input from parents and students created two very positive results. The first was the continuous dialogue among the staff regarding homework. The results of the discussions were:

1. A definition of the purpose for homework.
2. A description of the most appropriate type of assignments to be given to achieve a desired end.
3. A definition of how to follow-up on homework to make it a learning experience for students.
4. A definition of how much of the student grade at the junior high level should depend on homework.

The most appropriate type of assignments to be given to achieve the desired end, how to follow-up on homework to make it a learning experience for students and how much of the student grade at the

junior high level should depend on homework. The teacher meetings which took place throughout the year raised the consciousness of teachers concerning homework. Teachers indicated that the resulting decline in the number of academic deficiencies issued at the junior high level was due to the fact that more homework was completed and handed in. Although three teachers indicated they gave less homework than they did in the past, the majority stated they believed a change in attitude on their part regarding the type and length of assignments along with a firm commitment to collect and correct all homework made the difference. It must be noted that the district eligibility policy for participation in extra curricular activities had some impact on homework performance. Another variable which may have influenced the greater performance in homework was that class size was considerably smaller during the 1988 school year. Teachers felt they were able to give more time to responding to homework and working with students to individualize assignments. Greater coordination and articulation between junior high departments also resulted in a balance in the amount of homework assigned throughout the week.

The second positive result was the communication

with parents through the questionnaires. Many parents wrote additional comments on the surveys. Viewing the average family as having two children, a response of 167 families reflects almost 100% of the families in the school. The overwhelming response indicates homework is an area of great interest and concern to parents. The survey results also indicated that parents expect more homework than is being assigned, that parents believe very strongly that homework is important and that the majority of parents take an active interest in their child's school work. Although the students' perception of how much time they spend on homework differs from parents, most students believe they receive enough homework and that homework, especially studying for tests, is important for academic progress.

Finally, the parent and student questionnaires resulted in strengthening the bond between home and school. The perception of the staff regarding parent interest in school work, the environment in which children worked on school projects at home and the amount of attention children received from parents during school work has changed greatly. Prior to analysis of the parent survey responses, teachers

believed parents were not actively involved in their child's school work and had a negative attitude about homework. After the analysis of the data, teachers felt greater support and interest from parents.

Recommendations

The writer has four specific recommendations regarding homework as a result of this study.

1. Teachers, administration and parents should formulate a homework policy which fits the philosophy of the community and is academically sound.
2. The homework performance of students and the policy should be evaluated at least once a year. If the policy is educationally appropriate, adherence to it will bring about success for students.
3. The school and parents must communicate with each other regarding homework. Parents believe very strongly in the positive impact of homework on academic success and support homework for their children.
4. To be academically sound, a homework policy should include two crucial elements; the belief that

homework should have an educational purpose understood by the child and that homework should be collected, corrected and returned by teachers.

Dissemination

The results of the practicum project were disseminated to three groups. First, they were shared with the staff in grades 3-8 at a general staff meeting. The overwhelming parental response to the survey was very rewarding to the staff. Parental interest was an indication of support and interest in homework and education. Teachers also felt tremendous support from parents due to the large percentage of parents who indicated they assist their child with homework. Secondly, the results of the survey were shared with the district superintendent of schools and the governing board in a presentation one month prior to the adoption of the revised homework policy. At the following board meeting, the new policy was unanimously adopted (Appendix F). Thirdly, a copy of the practicum report was shared with the county superintendent of curriculum who will disseminate the results to administrators of small schools in the county. Finally, the results of the surveys and the

review of the literature will be submitted for publication in educational journals.

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ACADEMIC DEFICIENCY NOTICE

School	Telephone	Date
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NOTICE TO PARENT/GUARDIAN: Your child's scholastic achievement in this subject is not satisfactory. Please review the deficiencies with your child and consider carefully the recommendations checked.

Student (Please print full name)	Class
----------------------------------	-------

Teacher	Subject
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DEFICIENCIES

☐ Homework missing or incomplete	☐ Poor test results
☐ Generally unprepared for class	☐ Incomplete notebook
☐ Inadequate reports or projects	☐ Low interest level
☐ Insufficient class participation	☐ Lacks foundation
☐ Poor attendance: # of days absent _____	

RECOMMENDATIONS

☐ Tutoring probably required	☐ More study and preparation
☐ School resource center	☐ Schedule conference with: _____ Teacher
☐ Pay attention in class	☐ Counselor

Comments: _____

Authorized signature _____ Title _____

APPENDIX B

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY SHEET

RESPONSIBILITY SHEET

STUDENT NAME _____ HOMEROOM _____ DATE _____

Please indicate this student's performance in your class during the week reported by indicating "Y" for yes and "N" for no.

SUBJECT	HOMework WAS COMPLETED SATISFACTORILY	STUDENT NAME PREPARED FOR CLASS	CONDUCT WAS ACCEPTABLE	TEACHER COMMENTS/INITIALS
	M T W TH F	M T W TH F	M T W TH F	M T W TH F
READING				
ENGLISH				
SO. ST.				
MATH				
SCIENCE				
P.E.				
MUSIC				
ART				

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

TEACHER HOMEWORK SURVEY

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HOMEWORK SURVEY

A homework policy committee is reviewing a proposed homework policy which is currently in effect. The committee is interested in your reaction to the policy and whether there is a need for revision. In addition to parents, the staff and students of the school will be surveyed in order to learn their feelings regarding the policy and receive their recommendations for improvement.

Please take a minute to fill out the following questionnaire and return it to the principal.

The proposed policy is:

1. There must be a real educational purpose for homework.
2. Homework must meet a specific educational need.
3. Homework should not be assigned for punishment.
4. Homework should be thoroughly understood by a child before it is assigned.
5. Homework must be checked by a teacher.
6. It should not be assigned more than two or three days a week.
7. Assignments should take about thirty minutes of a child's time.

TEACHER'S SURVEY

1. Please respond to each item in the policy statement above by filling out the form below.

	<u>AGREE</u>	<u>DISAGREE</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

1. What grade do you teach (3-6) _____
2. What subject(s) do you teach (7-8) _____
3. At what grade level do you believe homework should begin:
K____ 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6____ 7____ 8____
4. How many minutes a night do you feel a child at each of the grade levels designated should spend on homework?

	30 min.	60 min.	90 min.	120 min.	180+ min.
Grade 3	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. How many minutes should it take the students in your class to do the homework you assign.

_____ minutes/ night

6. Check which types of homework you feel are important:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| A. Assignments not completed | D. Projects_____ |
| completed during class_____ | |
| B. New assignments_____ | E. Studying for tests_____ |
| C. Reports_____ | F. Drill_____ |

7. Do you feel that homework makes a contribution toward academic performance?

_____ Yes _____ No

8. General comments: _____

APPENDIX D

PARENT HOMEWORK SURVEY

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HOMEWORK SURVEY

A homework policy committee is reviewing a proposed homework policy which is currently in effect. The committee is interested in your reaction to the policy and whether there is a need for revision. In addition to parents, the staff and students of the school will be surveyed in order to learn their feelings regarding the policy and receive their recommendations for improvement.

Please take a minute to fill out the following questionnaire and return it to the principal.

The proposed policy is:

1. There must be a real educational purpose for homework.
2. Homework must meet a specific educational need.
3. Homework should not be assigned as punishment.
4. Homework should be thoroughly understood by a child before it is assigned.
5. Homework must be checked by a teacher.
6. It should not be assigned more than two or three days a week.
7. Assignments should take about thirty minutes of a child's time.

PARENT'S SURVEY

1. Please respond to each item in the policy statement above by filling out the form below.

AGREE

DISAGREE

COMMENTS

1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____

PARENT'S SURVEY CONTINUED

2. What grade is your child presently in? _____
3. At what grade level do you believe homework should begin?

4. How many minutes a night do you feel a child at each of the grade levels designated should spend on homework?
- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Min./night _____ | Min./night _____ |
| 3rd _____ | 7th _____ |
| 4th _____ | 8th _____ |
| 5th _____ | |
| 6th _____ | |
5. How many minutes a night is your child presently spending on homework?
_____ minutes/ night
6. Check which types of homework you feel are important:
- A. Assist directly _____
 - B. Encourage as needed _____
 - C. No help should be provided _____
 - D. Establish time and place for homework _____
 - E. Other _____
7. What type of homework does your child have most often?
- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| _____ assignments not completed | _____ projects |
| _____ in class | |
| _____ new assignments | _____ studying for tests |
| _____ reports | _____ drill |
8. Do you feel that homework makes a contribution toward academic performance?
_____ YES _____ NO
8. General comments: _____

STUDENT HOMEWORK SURVEY

GRADE _____

1. How many days per week do you have homework?
1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
2. How many minutes per day does it take you to do your homework?
1/2 hour _____ 1 hour _____ 1 1/2 hours _____
2 hours _____ more _____
3. Do you feel the amount of homework is:
Too much _____ Too little _____ Just right _____
4. Do you feel the homework is helpful to you in your daily work?
Yes _____ No _____
5. Do you have a special place to do homework at home?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Do you watch TV while doing homework?
Yes _____ No _____
7. Do you listen to the radio or stereo while doing homework?
Yes _____ No _____
8. Do your parents help you with your homework?
Yes _____ No _____ Sometimes _____
9. Is your homework corrected by your teacher and returned to you?
Yes _____ No _____ Sometimes _____
10. Do you think homework helps your grades?
Yes _____ No _____ Sometimes _____
11. What kinds of homework do you feel have helped you most in school?

_____ assignments you did not
complete in class
_____ new assignments
_____ reports

_____ studying for tests
_____ projects
_____ drill
_____ other _____

Comments: _____

HOMEWORK POLICY 5.8

Homework will be given in all grades on a regular basis for the purpose of promoting responsibility, providing practice of skills and fostering independent study habits. The amount and frequency of giving homework will be determined by each teacher. All homework will be collected and evaluated. ADOPTED: FEBRUARY 5, 1987

When planning homework assignments, teachers in grades 3-8 shall use the following criteria as a guide:

1. There must be a real educational purpose for homework.
2. Homework must meet a specific educational need.
3. Homework should not be assigned for punishment.
4. Homework should be thoroughly understood by a child before it is assigned.
5. Homework should be checked by a teacher.
6. Homework should not be assigned more than two or three days a week.
7. Assignments should take about thirty minutes of a child's time.

PROPOSED: APRIL 6, 1989

ADOPTED: MAY 11, 1989